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ABSTRACT

Self-study course materials for parents who wish to learn more about 6- to 12-year-old children are provided. Lessons focus on (1) growth and development; (2) relations between chronological ages and developmental stages; (3) self-concept; and (4) communication. Lesson 1 discusses physical, emotional, social, and mental development. Lesson 2 lists characteristics associated with children who are 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 years old and discusses clusters of developmental accomplishments of children at different ages. Lesson 3 provides examples of dimensions of children's lives that determine self-concept, including family climate, family economic status, personal beliefs and religion, attitude toward family members, attitude toward peers, opinions of peers, school demands, school opportunities, the impact of the mass media, biological maturation, and physical state. Lesson 4 emphasizes the importance of listening to children, lists six suggestions to improve communication with children, lists seven guidelines for listening to children, and discusses six reasons why parents can have profound influence on their children. A form for requesting a certificate of course completion is appended. (RH)

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Arizona Cooperative Extension Service
PARENTIME
A Self-Study Course

LESSON 1. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Understanding 6 to 12 Year Olds
Shirley O'Brien, Human Development Specialist

Why This Study?

If you go out looking for materials on how to live with the 6 to 12-year old, you're not going to find much. This age group has been neglected by researchers and writers. There is more interest in the preschooler who's rapidly developing and the teen-ager who's struggling with the transition from childhood to adulthood.

But the 6 to 12 age span is an important one, too. It's actually made up of three separate developing periods -- the 6- to 8-year old; the 9- to 10-year old; and the 11- to 12-year old. You'll note these three periods referred to throughout this series. Taken all together, there's a lot that happens in these 7 years.

The most notable change during this 7-year period is in physical growth. A child grows rapidly and many of the girls and some of the boys reach puberty.

Another important change is in people relationships. The child moves away from parents and the home and closer to friends and the school or organized groups.

By registering for the PARENTIME SELF-STUDY COURSE, you have indicated an interest in the rapid changes your child is making as he or she matures toward adolescence. These lessons are designed to help you not only understand these changes and the behaviors which accompany them but to enrich your child's environment in order for your child to reach his or her maximum potential.

In this lesson you'll be learning how children develop. You will achieve greater insight into your child's stages of development.

Your 6- to 12-year old is growing in four ways -- physically, emotionally, socially and mentally. There are certain abilities each child will acquire as he or she goes through this age span. However, as you read through these abilities keep in mind each child grows at his or her own rate. You can't compare children. Your child may be going through the stages at a slower rate than your neighbor's child. But that doesn't mean your child is less intelligent, has less potential, or will not catch up.

1. Physical Development

During the 6 to 12 age range, a child grows rapidly and acquires many new competencies such as swimming, biking and skating, for example. Your child will probably learn to hang by the knees, jump rope, cross the eyes, snap the fingers, wink an eye and whistle, just to mention a few. Here are some physical changes you'll notice:

* Gets adult teeth.

* Hair grows darker.

* Girls often are taller and heavier.

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* Hands and legs reach adult size earlier than most other parts of the body. That's why some children look all hands and feet for a time.

* Legs get longer. The child that begins puberty later is likely to have longer legs in adulthood since the legs have had a greater length of time to grow.

* Your child will gain greater dexterity during this age span and learn many new skills that require fine muscle coordination. Those fingers can learn to play the piano and do needlework as well as pick up a ball or a glass of water. A child can learn ballet, tap dance, and soccer as well as to run, jump, and kick.

Persons of this age may participate in a number of games and play activities.

Try to remember the favorite games and play activities you participated in when you were your child's age. List two or three.

Think back on what your child has done during the past week. List several of the games or play activites engaged in.

Are they the same? _____ Different?

If they are different, why?

Let's look at the games and activities in relation to physical development. Name three activities and indicate what various parts of the body would be doing.

Activities	1. _____	2. _____	3. _____
a. Legs			
b. Knees			
c. Feet			
d. Trunk			
e. Arms			
f. Wrist			
g. Hand			
h. Fingers			
i. Eyes			
j. Mouth			
k. Ears			

As children increase in age, their bodies can do more difficult or involved activities. They develop ability from the general to the specific or from the larger parts to the finer. To catch a ball requires eye and hand coordination. To catch a ball on the run involves the legs, arms, hands and eyes all working together. Watch a group of 6- to 9-year olds play ball. How do they catch it? Why?

Now, watch a group of 9- to 12-year olds. What kind of physical abilities do you observe in various children? How are some more advanced than others?

2. Emotional Development

Children experience the same emotions as adults only in different ways. The child between 6 and 12 gives in to impulses more than the adult does. Six-year-old Vicky may jump across the room as if on a pogo stick when her parents tell her the family's going to her favorite cousin's house for the weekend. Eight-year-old Ross may squeal with delight when he sees the new bike he got for his birthday.

The way children express emotions changes between this 6 and 12 period. Below is a chart of feelings everybody experiences. Please jot down a few notes about how your children or others you have seen express these feelings.

	6-8 years	9-10 years	11-12 years
LOVE			
ANGER			
FEAR			
HAPPINESS			
GUILT			
JEALOUSY			
SADNESS			
EXCITEMENT			
FRUSTRATION			

The children in the younger part of the 6 to 12 range tend to express feelings readily and only for a short time. They'll have a sudden outburst and then go on to something else. The older children may let feelings simmer before they express them. It may take them longer to get over a feeling.

The younger children share feelings with parents more readily. The older children tend to share their feelings with friends rather than parents.

Let's look at a specific feeling -- fear. Fear comes from a variety of sources.

1. Animals -- Six-year-olds may be very afraid of animals. That's because many animals are so much larger than they. They're also less familiar with some animals. Younger children tend to fear the unknown. This fear steadily decreases through age 12.

2. Dark - About a fifth of 6-year-olds are afraid of the dark. By age 10, though, few express this feeling.

3. Ghosts - About a third of 6-year-olds fear ghosts. This fear rapidly declines and by age 10 is almost nonexistent. The children have learned by this time that ghosts don't exist.

4. People - Fear of people varies through the age span. About a fifth of 6-year-olds fear people. The fear subsides in the 7- to 8-year range but steadily increases in the 9- to 12-year age.

5. Natural Disasters - For the youngest age, almost no fear exists. But after 7 and 9 years of age, about a third have a fear of natural disasters.

6. Machinery - This is another fear of less concern at the lower age range but that increases with age. About a fifth of 6-year-olds fear machinery. This group increases to a third for the 7- to 10-year olds. It increases again slightly for the 11- and 12-year olds.

   What fears do your children have?

Try to remember what your fears were when you were your child's age? List some of them.

3. Social Development

A child's relationship to parents and other children changes dramatically during this period of 6 to 12. A child moves away from parents as a source of guidance and companionship and moves closer to peers.

Relating to Parents

Six-to 8-year-olds still want supervision from their parents. They seek direction but want some freedom to make choices from suggested alternatives. They retain many "babyish" characteristics and still want to be cuddled by their parents. But, of course, they don't want any of their friends to know. At this age many will come home from school with much to share.

The 9- to 10-year old wants some limits, but also wants increasing freedom to make his/her own decisions. This age group thinks parents are okay. They bring some information home from school, but less than before.

At 11 and 12 the struggle for independence starts getting underway. These older children develop a cocksure attitude. They feel all is under control. They think their parents are impossible at times. This age child brings home little information about school. Some are ashamed of the old-fashioned ways of their parents. When a parent says - "When I was your age..." - the 11 to 12-year old groans and can hardly believe you were ever that young.

Think back to a confrontation situation that has happened between you and your child in each of these three age brackets. Write the example. If you haven't gone through one of the ages yet, ask a friend or neighbor to relate a situation to you or consider the situations below:

6 to 8-year old

1. Situation:

(Example: Child wants to continue playing; parents say it is mealtime).

2. Write down the best way to handle it keeping in mind what's been said about the 6-to 8-year old:

9- to 10-year old

1. Situation:

(Example: Child wants mini-bike; parents think they are too dangerous).

2. What's the best way to handle this one?

11- to 12-year old

1. Situation:

(Example: Child wants to go camping with friends; parents feel supervision is necessary).

2. What do you feel is the best way to handle this situation?

Relating to Friends

The middle years of 6 to 12 are known collectively as the "gang" stage. Children group together in gangs of the same sex and same age drawn together from acquaintances at school and in the neighborhood. They form secret clubs and do secretive things that adults must not know about. These clubs give definite rules -- "you can belong if you do this and that." Some groups will be more "in" than others. Some youngsters will be ostracized and will go off and form their own groups.

In these gangs children learn the basics of leadership, support, justice, and ideals. They play games and use rhythms and riddles handed down from generation to generation. You'll hear them tell some of the same jokes you can remember telling at their age. Knock-knock jokes have been a hit for years. Stunts include crossing eyes, contorting faces and rubbing the belly while patting the head.

These children tend to be superstitious and don't walk under ladders or step on cracks in the sidewalks. They may use a coded language to communicate, such as pig latin. All these antics adhered to by club members make their group "in" and all others "out."

During the gang years collections are important. Children fill their pockets and drawers with all kinds of odds and ends. They exchange and barter for things, too, such as playing cards, sport cars and toy cars.

During the latter part of the 6 to 12 age, children learn to concentrate on a few collections and don't collect just anything and everything as they did earlier.

Friendships are same sex rather than opposite sex through most of this age range. It's not very likely that secret societies include both sexes. Boys find girls awful, and girls can't stand "those boys."

However, during the latter part of this period children begin to be interested in each other as couples. Usually, though, the girls become more interested in the boys rather than vice versa since girls reach puberty at an earlier age.

Relating to Other Adults

Parents frequently wonder how their children act away from home since some of their "at-home" manners are appalling at times.

What are some of the guides you have provided for your child in relating to other adults?

Star (*) those you hope your child uses.

Observe your child in the presence of another adult and see how many of the guides you provided are being carried through in the child's special way.

4. Mental Development

During the 6 to 12 age span, the child is exposed to many new learning experiences and gains much knowledge. Here are some of the main changes you'll notice in your child's mental development.

Memory

Did you go to a zoo during your vacation last year? Your child will begin to remember details of incidents like this that happened months and years before. He/she was able to remember many things during the preschool years. But memory becomes a useful tool to your child during the 6 to 12 span. When your child becomes an adult, he/she will be able to remember much that happened during this 7-year period whereas a few isolated incidents from pre-school years will be recalled.

Future

Your child will begin to understand the concept of future better. If you tell your son you're going to grandma's house in three weeks, he'll have an idea of how much waiting time that will involve. He won't come asking you every few days about when you're going on your visit.

Dimensions

At the younger end of this age range, the child doesn't fully understand the relationship between size and dimension. If you hand 6-year old Susan two balls of play dough the same size and ask her if they're the same size, she'll agree. If you flatten one into a cookie shape and ask her if they're the same size now, she'll reply no. She thinks the flatter one is bigger because it looks bigger. As she grows older she'll learn that different shapes may only appear to be different sizes depending on which angle you view.

Length

Just because something looks longer doesn't mean it is longer. As your child ages, he/she will realize this. If you place two equal length pencils side by side so that one sticks out farther than the other one, the 6-year old will say the one that sticks out farther is longer. Between 6 and 12, children learn that an object doesn't change size every time it is moved.

Can you think of some of your everyday activities that will help your child further understand length? (Don't forget all the things you do in the kitchen). List:

Numbers

Six-year-old Joe will know how to count. But it's between that age and 12 that he acquires a real understanding of numbers. He will begin to understand that four means a group of four apples or four cars. He will also understand fourth in relation to third and fifth in size and position. If you give him five sticks of different lengths, he will be able to line them up so that number five is the longest, 4 the next longest, 3 the next longest with 1 being the smallest.

Here's another example of the meaning of numbers that finally comes clear as a child reaches 12. Find 8 cups and 8 saucers. Line up the cups and place the saucers in a circular group:

Ask your child if there are more cups than saucers, fewer cups than saucers, or the same number of cups and saucers. If the child hasn't developed an understanding of the meaning of numbers, he/she will say there are more cups because the line-up of cups is longer.

Now set the cups on saucers so the child can see that there are the same number of cups and saucers. Explain to your child that it looked as if there were more cups but there actually weren't.

Don't be discouraged if your child got the answer wrong. This is the normal answer in the earlier part of the 6- to 12-year age span. Provide similar experiences for your child every once in a while. In your everyday activities, you can help your child understand the meaning of numbers. List some activities you can plan for your child:

Your child between 6 and 12 will grasp many complicated concepts that seem easy to us as adults. They seem so easy to us that we can't remember their ever being complicated. It's hard for us to relate to the intelligence level of this age group because of this.

Can you think of a time when you underestimated your child's intelligence level?

Can you think of a situation in which you overestimated your child's intelligence?

Can you think of a time when you helped your child see the light about something? This would be a time when you both felt good because of the mutual understanding you achieved.

The "teachable moment" occurs many times a day in the life of your 6 to 12 year old. It is a moment when your child is trying something new, puzzled about an experience or questioning a concept or relationship. If you are available and sensitive to these moments, you can say a word of encouragement, offer a smile, hug or pat or just listen to your child "think out loud." You will be enriching your child's physical, emotional, social and mental development which will have life-long benefits.

In this lesson you have looked at the over-all picture of how children develop from 6 to 12. In the next lesson you'll look more closely at each step in the developmental process.

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LESSON 2. AGES AND STAGES

Understanding 6 to 12 Year Olds

Shirley O'Brien, Human Development Specialist

Human development is a process that begins in infancy and continues until death. For convenience, researchers and teachers have grouped together certain ages with somewhat similar characteristics and problems. These stages could be looked upon as building blocks. Each helps to build onto the other. As a child matures he/she becomes more capable of dealing with the complicated issues of family, community, and larger society.

In the last lesson you looked at the 6 to 12 age as a whole. In this lesson you'll look at each age and some of the general characteristics of that age. Keep in mind that these features are averages, and therefore, only guides to understanding your child.

As stated earlier your child is an individual and develops on his/her own timetable. To have a better understanding of some of the characteristics your child might have, look at the three-year span. Your 7-year old may act in some ways like a 6-year old and in other ways like an 8-year old.

Look over these "typical" characteristics and check the ones your child has or had.

6

highly active

dislikes losing

usually not modest

works in spurts

self-centered

seeks to be center of attention

has positive attitude toward school

proud of self and skills

more ready to dish out than receive criticism

many times competitive with brothers and sisters

sensitive about being called names, but calls others names

often pairs up and has best friend; tends to enjoy leaving out a third child

Give examples of how your child has exhibited these characteristics:

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7

is active

likes to know limits

sees teacher as guide

less impulsive

worries about being liked

complains of unfair treatment by playmates

listens as well as talks at mealtime

enjoys activities alone as well as with others

relates better to brothers and sisters but this depends on age (closer in age, more fights).

very sensitive to reactions of others

feelings of shame often center on the body

end result more important than "route"

Give examples of how your child has exhibited these characteristics:

8

outgoing

enjoys dramatic play

often demanding of parents

curious about nature, things and people

talks with adults rather than to adults

concerned about the reasons behind things

likes to help when in the mood

judgmental and critical both of self and others

seeks new experiences;tries out things

attitude toward opposite sex a combination of attraction and hostility

discovering parents are human and make mistakes

often more polite away from home than at home

begins to select friends on basis of qualities or for a reason

Give examples of how your child has exhibited these characteristics:

9

gaining self-confidence

less quarreling

perfecting motor skills

becoming more inner directed

less demanding of parent's attention

likes organized play with very definite rules

bursts of emotion and impatience

accepts failures and mistakes more realistically

tries to give impression of calm and steadfast

becoming selective in activities and will spend time with them

girls may start puberty spurt of growth

Give examples of how your child has exhibited these characteristics:

10

helpful

likes and enjoys friends

beginning to agree logically

individual interests more long lasting

motor skills fairly well developed

enjoys ability to "fit in" at home, school and play

relation with parents, teachers and friends at all-time high

enjoys organized activities and has secret groups, codes, etc.

seems to be at peace with self and the world (calm and self-confident)

shows concern and is sensitive to others

begins development of special motor skills (sports, music, dancing, handcrafts).

Give examples of how your child has exhibited these characteristics:

11

- very active
- appetite increases
- at times can be loud, boorish and rude
- at times defies adult authority
- tends to be moody, sensitive
- with strangers may be cooperative, friendly, lively and pleasant
- frequent arguments with parents
- friends are selected because of mutual interest
- interest in the opposite sex is changing
- attitudes about school are changing

Give examples of how your child has exhibited these characteristics:

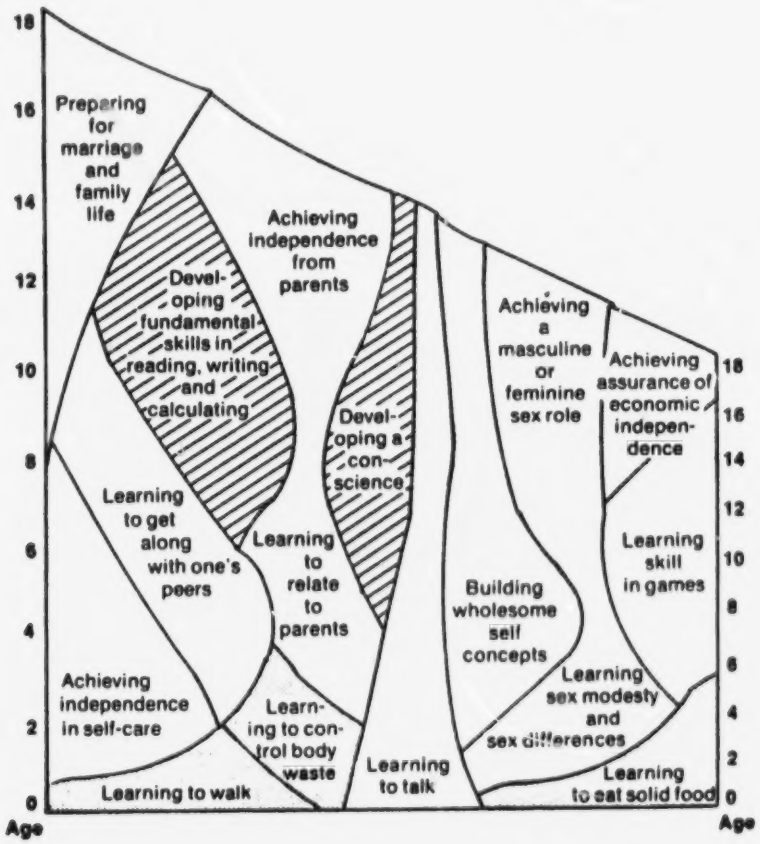
12

- outgoing, enthusiastic for short periods
- emotions are extreme - either really likes something or really hates it
- believes he/she no longer a child
- less self-centered
- emphasis on "best" friend
- can be critical of physical appearance (girls more so)
- sometimes has difficulty accepting praise
- participates less in family activities
- talks frequently of the opposite sex
- some restlessness, day dreaming and fooling around in school

Give examples of how your child has exhibited these characteristics:

Sometimes it's a relief to parents to read through general characteristics of children at various ages. They discover their children aren't as abnormal as they thought.

You've looked at ways your child acts between 6 and 12. Now you'll look at what tasks he/she learns to master. Here is a diagram of the tasks children learn from birth to age 18.



Ages and Stages Diagram

Source: Bernard, Harold W. Human Development in Western Culture: Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1970, p. 33.

Referring to the diagram, let's divide the whole and examine the parts alone:

Control body waste Eat solid food Learn to walk	These three behaviors are learned in a relatively short period of time. They're not of much concern in middle childhood.
Skills in reading, writing, calculating	These two characteristics span a number of years.
Developing a conscience	In developing a conscience a young person moves from a punishment/obedience orientation to a self-determined orientation.

This process has roughly four stages:

(1) child obeys to avoid punishment
(2) child conforms to obtain rewards or have some kind of favor given
(3) child conforms to avoid disapproval by others
(4) child conforms to avoid conflict with the law or guilt feelings

Developing a conscience involves learning to determine what is accepted and rejected by parents, school, friends and society.

Independence in self-care Learning to talk Self-concept Skills in games	Perfection or maturation of already acquired skills, such as self-care, speech and skills in games, occurs between 6 and 12. The self-concept will be discussed in the next lesson. The 6- to 12-year-old is continuing to build

feelings about self. By the end of middle childhood, most children are able to critically evaluate the person they are becoming. With this new skill comes the pain of adolescence.

Getting along with peers Relating to parents Sex	Getting along with peers is especially important at the 6- to 12-year-old stage. This age child is learning not only cooperative skills but competitive skills as well. Frequently, 6- to 12-year-old youngsters work out their competitive feelings better with less adult involvement.

The relationship with parents changes during this 6 to 12 span. In the preschool years the child is very dependent on parents. This age child feels parents are always right. Much of this dependency continues from 6 to about 8. Between ages 8 and 10 the child sees the parent as sort of in between. Children are not too concerned about their relationship to their parents during this span.

However, between 10 and 12 the young person begins struggling for independence from parents. This can become a difficult period because many parents are not prepared for struggle.

Feelings and attitudes about sex change during the middle years. In the pre-school years the child is developing some attitudes related to his/her and others' bodies. He/she is curious and asks questions. Younger children are not too concerned with modesty. But as they reach 7 to 8 years of age, modesty becomes more important. At puberty (11 to 13) they become concerned about a rapidly changing body and what the change means. During this time they are expanding their ideas about femaleness and maleness, which is one reason for close same-sex friendships.

Preparing for economic independence Preparing for marriage and family life	Economic independence or at least initial steps toward independence are achieved at the 6- to 12-year old age. Many children receive allowances and earn money in various ways during this age. Allowances are usually given to cover some fixed

costs, such as school lunches, with some money left over for the child to spend or save in any way he/she wants to. Between about 9 and 12 years old the young person may be able to earn extra money by doing yard work, delivering papers or babysitting. This age child dreams of the things that can be purchased with the money that sometimes takes several months of saving.

During the 6 to 12 age span, the ability to handle money grows. The 6- to 8-year-old seldom reaches goals obtainable by saving money. The 9- to 12-year-old is more likely to reach an economic goal. This age child has become more patient and recognizes that some rewards are not immediate.

Preparing for marriage and family life might more accurately be stated in this way--the young person is preparing for making decisions later. Some will marry; some won't. Some will have children; some won't. Their decisions will be based on observation, discussion and feelings about themselves.

After this brief explanation of what is happening, return to Ages and Stages Diagram on page II-5. You will notice the scales on the left and right differ. Find your child's age on the left-hand scale. Now, find your child's age on the right-hand scale. Draw a straight, dotted line from left to right connecting the ages i.e. 8.....8. Now, draw a solid line one year above and another one year below the age of your child.

Identify and list the areas your child:

HAS EXPERIENCED	IS EXPERIENCING	WILL EXPERIENCE

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LESSON 3. SELF-CONCEPT

Your child's self-concept is an answer to a question--"Who am I?" Before your child can find the answer, he/she must experience and begin to understand some of life's most difficult and exciting moments. Parents, friends, school, media and the unique person your child is all play a part in the discovery of the "person I am." Each tiny bit of information from learning to tie a shoe, to giving a speech, to being smiled at by a friend, becomes a part of the complete picture.

As a parent you play a special role in the development of your child's self-concept. The standards you set for your son or daughter become the yardstick your child uses to measure how worthwhile and capable he or she is becoming.

Here are two exercises to help you think about your expectations:

What do you hope your child might accomplish or do this week? List activities or events you would like him or her to participate in:

Did you mention such things as athletics and music? Have you taken the time to sit down with your child and ask what he or she enjoys? Does your 6- to 12-year-old know what he or she does well? ____ Yes ____ No

Children in this age range like to participate in many different activities with friends.

What kind of friends does your child have now?

What kind of friends do you want your child to have two years from now?

By the latter part of this age range, young persons become more selective in their interests and activities. They tend to repeat those that bring feelings of satisfaction. Frequently, those activities which are continued involve their close friends. Friends are often chosen because of common interests.

Your expectations about such things as your child's friends and activities affect the child's self-concept. Following are examples of other parts of your child's life that help determine his or her self-concept.

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Family Climate

What's the climate at your house? Is it continually hot from constant family bickering or cool from cold shoulders? Or is it comfortable with the hot and cold temperatures moderated by good times together?

Here are two exercises to help you examine your family atmosphere.

1. List three or four family goals. These may be long-term or short-term.

2. List the members of your family and write a phrase describing how each is involved in reaching these goals.

There is usually a more harmonious atmosphere in a family that aims toward common goals and involves the children in decision making at a level appropriate to their understanding.

Families with these characteristics tend to survive times of difficulty better. All families face problems. When they do, the children will want to help in any way they can. It's important to include them in some way. With some problems children can be involved from the beginning. With others you may have to tell the children "we have problems and we will talk with you when we can."

Family Economic Status

Regardless of how much money you have, you could always use more it seems. There may be times when your family faces a real economic pinch. Try not to shield the children from this reality. Again, involve them at their level of understanding. They may feel guilty if they know money is limited and all their activities are continuing as usual.

What are some ways you involve your 6- to 12-year-old in economic decisions?

Personal Beliefs, Religion

A person's religion and personal beliefs affect feelings about one's self. What does your particular set of beliefs or religion say about the individual person and self-worth?

What is taught to your 6- to 12-year-old that would help develop positive feelings about self?

Attitude Toward Family Members

The 6- to 12-year-old has developed a series of feelings about each member of your family. Some of these feelings are positive, some negative and some in-between.

List several things you as a family member can do to help one another have positive feelings toward each other.

One way you can develop positive feelings between you and your children is to treat them in the same way you want them to treat you. Children learn so much from example. If you want to be able to trust your son Joey, then be someone he can trust. If you tell him you're going to do something, then do it. If he tells you something you're not to tell anyone else, then don't.

Attitude Toward Peers

What does your child think of children his or her same age? List some remarks you've heard your child make about his or her friends.

List some remarks your child has made about others who are not friends, but casual acquaintances.

What does your child say about persons who have ideas different from his or hers or perhaps ideas different from yours?

How do these attitudes differ from the way you deal with friends, acquaintances or others?

Having positive feelings about one's self usually helps a person accept another person. You don't have to like everything about that other person. But it helps to recognize that everyone has some good qualities and that there are reasons why people behave in different ways.

Opinions of Peers

Friends can be great one moment and ugly the next. In the early part of this age range, children are usually quite honest with one another. Sometimes in their honesty, they are cruel. They will comment to one another about body build, size, selection of friends and mental ability. Often they seem to delight in avoiding a third child.

Find a group of 6- to 12-year-olds. You may go to a park, school, shopping center, church or wherever else you see persons in this age range. Try to observe a group that does not include your child.

Listen to the comments. What do they say to one another?

What are some names they call each other?

What action follows name-calling? Or how does the person react that has been called a name?

Sometimes a child will believe what agemates say about him or her and take on some of those characteristics. If Jane is called "dumb" or "stupid," she may decide to play that role in her group.

Peers are a powerful influence on the feelings children have about themselves.

School Demands

School takes up much of your child's time. Initially, most children are interested in school and find it a stimulating experience. But as the years continue, a student appears to lose some enthusiasm. Why might your child lose some of the initial interest?

School not only provides instruction in the three R's but sometimes develops so many activities and expectations that it appears to control the family.

List all the activities you can remember that were planned by the school for your child during the past week.

Go back to the list. Star (*) the items your child actually participated in. Then place an x by those that included the family.

Schools do plan many activities for youngsters beyond the classroom experience. Many of these occur before or after school or in the evenings. The number of choices appears to become greater as age increases.

What kinds of pressures are placed on students to participate in the activities?

Teachers, friends and parents place increasing expectations on the 6- to 12-year-old. Each expects the child to participate in some activities. Expectations may or may not be verbal, but they are communicated.

Identify several expectations you see the classroom situation placing on your 6- to 12-year-old. Keep in mind that these expectations have positive as well as negative qualities.

Go back to these expectations and determine what effect they might have on your child's self-concept.

School Opportunities

School does place many expectations on the young person, but there are many opportunities as well. List opportunities you see available in your school system.

Ask your 6- to 12-year-old to list what he or she sees as opportunities in the school system:

How are your lists alike and different? Go through each item on the lists and determine what each contributes to your child's self-concept. List these:

Are these some of the feelings you had hoped your 6- to 12-year-old might develop about himself or herself?

____ Yes ____ No

Why?

Mass Media Impact

What your child hears and sees also influences his or her self-concept. The average 6- to 12-year-old spends hours each week listening to and watching television, listening to records, attending movies or reading books or magazines. Have your child list favorite TV programs, movies, books.

How do the characters feel about themselves?

Ask your child to list five favorite records:

What is each saying about people? About life in general?

What influence do you, the school,and your child's friends have on his or her selection of TV programs, favorite records, books or movies?

Mass media has an influence on your child's self-concept. Your child may identify with some of the characters portrayed. Your child may imitate these characters in clothes styles, language and mannerisms.

How do you react to these?

Keep in mind that many of these mannerisms are short-term. They'll change as new heroes and heroines come along.

Biological Maturation

Each child is on her or his own growth timetable. But where a child is on this timetable in relation to the other children his or her same chronological age can have an effect on the child's self-concept.

Remember back to the time when you were between 6 and 12 and the friends you had. Can you identify a girl who started puberty early? What were her feelings about herself? How did she carry her body?

Remember the boy that was the shortest member of the class? For so long it seemed he would never grow. What kind of feelings did this person express? How did he carry his body?

The early maturing girl and the late maturing boy may encounter particularly difficult situations. Both probably wish they could be more like their friends. This person's feelings about self may be less positive than those of the person who is maturing at about the same time as friends. How might a parent cope with this situation?

Physical State

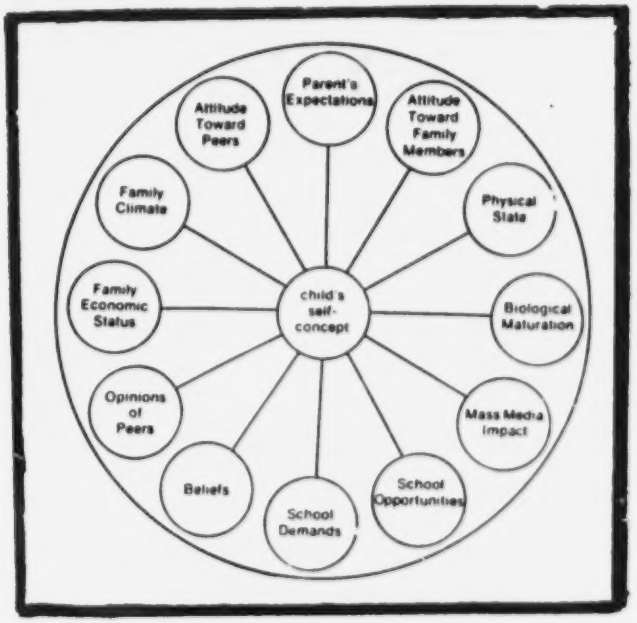
Children are all different, and this includes their physical state of well-being. Some appear to pick up a cold constantly and never be able to get rid of it. Others have serious illnesses that confine them to bed for long periods of time. Still others appear to have few physical limitations.

List five or six words that might describe the feelings of a 6- to 12-year-old who is usually healthy and physically active:

List five or six words that a 6- to 12-year-old might use to describe a person who's not always healthy or who has a physical limitation:

With a healthy physical state, it's easier for a young person to have positive feelings about self than when that person questions why he or she has to live with a problem or disability.

Many people, events and even a person's biological make-up contribute to a person's self-concept. Many different parts contribute to the larger whole as you can see in the following diagram:



Learning how to answer the question, "Who am I?" is a never-ending task. But for your child the most important help you can give is to let him or her know he or she is a special person. Every human being is a unique person and valuable for that uniqueness. Help your child discover the person he or she is and come to really like that person.

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Arizona Cooperative Extension Service
PARENTIME
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Understanding 6 to 12 Year Olds
Shirley O'Brien, Human Development Specialist

LESSON 4. COMMUNICATION

We talk a lot. In fact, we probably talk a lot more than we listen.

People do a lot of talking. But is anybody really listening to them? Are you listening to what your 6- to 12-year-old is telling you? If you are just hearing words or an occasional shout, you are probably missing the real message. Real listening is not an easy job. To hear the whole message you need to catch the feelings your child is trying to express.

A 6- to 12-year-old usually needs help in expressing his or her real feelings. During this age range a child is often confused by new and conflicting feelings. There are many self-doubts, fears and anxious moments that words alone can't express. By sharpening your total listening skills, you can begin to help your child become a good communicator.

How well do you listen? The following exercises will help you discover that words mix with gestures, body posture, facial expression and many other cues to send a complete message.

1. Become a team of two with one person being A and the other B. A will think of and try to tell B something that happened within the last 24 hours that made him or her happy. B meanwhile will distract A so that A has difficulty completing the message.

Try this for one minute. After the one-minute period, reverse roles.

A: What kind of feelings did you have when you were trying to share the happy experience with the other person?

B: How did you feel when you were distracting the person talking?

Now for a moment reflect on your experiences with your 6- to 12-year-old in the last 24 hours. How many times were you the distractor when your child had something to share? What did your child do when you had something to share with him or her?

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2. In this activity A is to talk about a happy experience within the past 24 hours and B is to listen attentively. B will encourage A to talk without words. Set a timer for three minutes and share.

Reverse roles and again set the timer for three minutes.

A: What kind of feelings did you have when the other person was listening?

B. What king of feelings did you have when you were the listener?

How does a 6- to 12-year-old respond after he or she has had to follow you around the house or yard trying to talk about something important?

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3. Both A and B should take a sheet of paper and draw a doodle--nothing fancy, just something that comes from your pencil easily. Don't show these doodles to each other.

Find two chairs and place them back to back. On a blank sheet of paper A is to try to draw the same doodle B did while listening to B's description of B's doodle. A can ask questions. Then reverse roles. Show each other your interpretations when you're done and compare them to the original doodles.

How did you feel when you were trying to describe your doodle?

How did you feel when you were trying to draw what was being described?

Think of your 6- to 12-year-old and how you give directions.
(1) What kind of experiences do they have to rely on?

(2) What kinds of questions did you ask?
(3) What did you do to make your directions clear?

Giving directions verbally is difficult. Each person comes with a different frame of reference and ability to interpret.

Listen to yourself the next time you give your 6- to 12-year-old directions.

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4. Being a good listener involves more than your ears. With your eyes you have to watch gestures, expressions, posture--the non-verbal aspects of communication--as well.

Next time you are at a shopping center or grocery store or some other populated place, watch people communicate for about 15 minutes. What kind of non-verbal communication do you see? What kind of feelings do you think these convey?

Watch your 6- to 12-year-old and note what he or she nonverbally communicates to you.

What forms of nonverbal communication do you use when you are with your child?

Nonverbal communication can take many forms. You probably noticed many different gestures and expressions. Nonverbal communication can also take the form of silence and space. For example, did you notice long pauses in a conversation with your child? These may mean the topic was an uncomfortable one. How close were the two of you when you talked? Chances are if you were close your topic was a comfortable one, and you two felt good about each other.

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5. List a half-dozen qualities possessed by your child that you like:

When was the last time you let your child know you liked these qualities? Sometimes we expect young people to know how good we feel about them even though we never tell them. We may feel since we provide them with a nice house to live in and opportunities for their self-expressions that we need go no further. However, no form of nonverbal communication can substitute for verbal communication. When you are happy with your child, let the child know verbally. It's usually easier to communicate your disapproval to your child than your approval.

6. In this final activity, think about yourself. Identify a half-dozen good qualities you have in relating to your 6- to 12-year-old.

How do you share these with your child?

Identify six qualities you have that might be changed.

Go back over the list and think how a change might affect your relationship with your 6- to 12-year-old.

It's important to listen to your child for several reasons. If you take the time to really listen to your daughter Sara, she will appreciate it and feel good about herself. She will know every day that you really care about her.

Listening will also help you understand this age period in a child's life better. You'll get clues on how to deal with your child.

And listening to children can be a pure delight in itself. Children have such fresh, innocent views on life. An adult can gain insight into his or her own views by evaluating the frank, honest statements of children.

Another important aspect of family communication is increased language facility. One of the best ways to foster children's language development is to have conversations with them. (By "conversation" we mean a real verbal exchange between adult and child, not just an adult talking <u>to</u> a child.) But many adults find it difficult to talk easily with children. Often they can't think of what to say, and the conversation "just doesn't seem to go anywhere."

Here are six <u>Suggestions to Improve Communication with Children</u>:

1. <u>Be Interested</u>: Solicit children's ideas and opinions regularly. If you show children that you are really interested in what they think, what they feel, and in their opinions, they will become comfortable about expressing their thoughts to you.

2. <u>Avoid Deadened Questions</u>. Ask children the kinds of questions that will be likely to extend interaction rather than to cut it off. Questions which

require a yes or no or right answer ("What color is your sweater?") often lead a conversation to a dead end. But questions such as "What are some of the colors you like?" or "What are some other clothes you have of this color?" may extend the conversation.

3. Extend Conversation. Try to pick up a piece of your child's conversation and extend it. For instance, if a child says "I like to watch TV," then, in your response, use some of the same wording the child has used ("what are some of the TV shows you like best?"). If the child says: "Wonder Woman," then your next response could be "What does Wonder Woman do that you like seeing?" When you use the child's own phrasing or her own terms, you strengthen her confidence in her own conversational and verbal skills, and reassure her that her ideas are being listened to and valued.

4. Share Your Thoughts. Share with your child what you are thinking about. For instance, if you are puzzling over how to rearrange your furniture, or what to prepare for dinner, get your child involved with questions such as "I'm not sure where to put this shelf--where do you think would be a good place?" Or "What do you think Uncle John might like for dessert?" Be sure to take the child's comments seriously, thinking through with the practical implications of the ideas and suggestions offered.

5. Define and Reflect Feelings. When you suspect that something is bothering your child, make the best guess you can about what the problem is. Then phrase your questions indirectly: "It's the noise of the vacuum cleaner that bothers you, isn't it?" If you guessed right, you could talk about what to do, or how to cope with the problem. If you guessed wrong, you would be giving your child a chance to correct you and tell you what really is bothering him. Sometimes, just reflecting a child's feelings back encourages the child to tell you what's on his or her mind. Saying "You're really feeling sad today, aren't you?" is more likely to invite a child to share and confide feelings in you than asking: "What's wrong?"

6. Observe Cues. Watch the child for cues that it is time to end a conversation. When a child begins to stare into space, give really silly or way-out responses, it's probably time to stop the exchange.

One of the special values of adult-child conversation is that it gives children an opportunity to sort out and retrieve information they have already stored in their minds. In other words, they get opportunities to practice talking about thoughts, feelings, and impressions from experiences they have already had. At the same time, adults have a chance to find out about the children and how they understand those experiences. The more informed we are about how children understand their experiences, the more likely we are to help them to make the best sense of these experiences.

Talking to children is one skill, but as we said at the beginning of this lesson, listening to children is a completely different skill.

What is listening?

Listening is an active process of hearing and trying to understand the message underlying another's words. Taking time to listen and encourage self-expression is important in building and maintaining positive communication between parents and children. Listening gives you an opportunity to better understand how your children's thinking abilities and ideas are changing and progressing as they grow from preschool to adolescence.

Here are seven Guidelines for Listening to Children:

1. Be interested and attentive. Children can tell whether they have a parent's interest and attention by the way the parent replies or doesn't reply. Forget about the telephone and other distractions. Maintain eye contact to show that you are really with the child. Showing interest in children and their activities will encourage them to express their feelings and make them feel important. Children tend to feel very close to an adult who, by expressing concern and caring, gets them talking about themselves.

2. Encourage talking. Some children need an invitation to start talking. You might begin with "Tell me about your day at school." Children are more likely to share their ideas and feelings when others think them important.

3. Listen patiently. People think faster than they speak. With limited vocabulary and experience in talking, children often take longer than adults to find the right word. Listen as though you have plenty of time. Hurrying children or calling attention to their use of the wrong word while they are talking is upsetting and confusing.

4. Hear children out. Avoid cutting children off before they have finished speaking. It is easy to form an opinion or reject children's views before they finish what they have to say. It may be hard not to stop them and set them straight, but respect their right to have and to express their opinions. Parents set an example of consideration by waiting their turn to speak. By letting children fully develop their ideas, parents also gain valuable insight into children's understanding and abilities to reason.

5. Reflect feelings. Perhaps the most important skill of a good listener is the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and to imagine what they are experiencing apart from your own thoughts and feelings. Try to mirror your children's feelings by verbally reflecting them back to them. Children feel that you understand when you accept and recognize their feelings as young children. They are not always aware of their feelings, nor can they express them as well as adults can. You might reflect a child's feelings by commenting, "It sounds as if you're angry at your math teacher."

Restating or rephrasing what children have said is useful when they are experiencing powerful emotions which they may not be fully aware of: Child: "School is dumb! I hate it!" Parent: "Sounds like you're pretty angry at something that happened at school today." Young children need to learn that it is okay to have angry feelings but it is not okay always to act on them. You might say, "I know you are mad at her for breaking your toy and you feel like hitting her, but say it with words, don't hit."

6. Help clarify and relate experiences. As you listen try to clarify your child's feelings by stating them in your own words. Your wider vocabulary can help children express themselves as accurately and clearly as possible and give them a deeper understanding of inner thoughts and words. Child: "I got so upset I didn't know what I was doing." Parent: "You mean you panicked."

Parents can help children be aware of the relationship between their experiences, feelings and behavior by attempting to draw conclusions and generalizations, summarizing what has been said, making comparisons, and continually checking with the child to

verify the accuracy of all understandings.

7. Listen to nonverbal messages. Many messages children send are communicated nonverbally by their tone of voice, the look on their faces, their energy level, body posture, or change in behavior patterns. You can often learn more from the way a child says something than from what is said. When a child comes in obviously upset, be sure to find a quiet time later in the day when those emotions are under greater control and help explore those feelings.

You set a powerful example of good or poor communication. How? Communication skills are influenced by the examples children see and hear. Parents who listen to their children with interest, attention, and patience set a valuable example. The greatest audience children can have is an adult who is important to them and interested in them.

* * *

In these four lessons you've examined various aspects of your relationship with your 6- to 12-year-old child. In conclusion, you're going to get a chance to examine what impact your family situation is having on your child. During the 6 to 12 age range, your child is influenced by a great number of people, events and occurrences. But it's your family that was there as your child's life began and that family will continue to be there. Because of the time your child spends under your care and influence, no one has more power in his or her life. Here are some reasons why:

TIME A child spends more time with his or her parents than with any other adult.	**INTENSITY** A child has a deeper involvement with his or her parents than with any other adult.
DURATION The family as a unit has life-long contact with the child.	**INFLUENCE** Parents control many of the contacts a child has with society and society's contacts with the child.
CONSISTENCY The way a parent treats a child, whether patient or harsh, tends to continue throughout life.	**RESPONSIBILITY** Society recognizes parents' responsibility for their child's growth and development.

The impact of each of these six qualities changes as you and your child grow and society's expectations change.

Take time to consider your child's age and how each quality is currently influencing his or her life and your relationship with the child.

Your County Extension Office is a source of information on human development and family life, as well as other family living topics. This series, Parentime, is only one of many Cooperative Extension Service educational projects. There are other publications, meetings, and visual programs on topics of concern to parents. Ask your County Extension Home Economist about these. Also ask about discussion groups on the child from 6 to 12. Much information was presented in these four lessons. If you would like to discuss the topic further with other parents, your Extension Home Economist and the author, ask for a meeting to be scheduled.

NOTE: The author would like to acknowledge format, conceptual ideas, examples and exercises from the following University Extension parent study courses:

- "I Am a Person," Iowa State University Extension Service, Carol Anderson, Author.
- "Family Living," University of Illinois Extension Service, Lynda Harriman, Author.
- "Discipline Is Not a Dirty Word," The New York State College of Human Ecology at Cornell University, Jennifer Birckmayer, Author.
- "Discipline for Yound Children," Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Extension Service, Betsy Schenck, Author.

NOTE: You have now completed the four-part series called Parentime: Understanding 6- to 12-Year-Olds. If you would like a Certificate of Completion, please fill out the enclosed form (REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE) and send to your County Extension Home Economist.

PARENTIME

A Self-Study Course

Understanding 6 to 12 Year Olds

PARENTIME
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REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE

I have completed all 4 lessons. Please send my certificate of completion.

Name : _____

Address: _____

_____

Telephone: _____

A. Age:

	Male	Female
Under 21	_____	_____
21-35	_____	_____
36-55	_____	_____
Over 55	_____	_____

B. Educational Level:

Less than high school	_____
High school	_____
College, below Baccalaureate	_____
Graduate or Professional	_____

	Yes	No
1. Did your spouse study any of the lessons?	_____	_____
2. Did you share the lessons with your friends? How many? _____	_____	_____
3. Have you made any changes in the following?		
a. Increased understanding of developmental changes	_____	_____
b. Increased understanding of ages/stages	_____	_____
c. Increased skills to develop self-concept	_____	_____
d. Increased communication skills	_____	_____
4. Have the lessons made you more aware of the ways you parent your children?	_____	_____
5. Have you learned new ways to parent? How many? _____	_____	_____
6. Were these lessons helpful to you?	_____	_____
7. Would you like more information on child rearing?	_____	_____

8. What did you like best about PARENTIME? _____

_____

9. What suggestions would you have to improve PARENTIME? _____

_____